



*Living Well*

August 15th is National Relaxation Day

## RELAXATION TECHNIQUES & TIPS

*Just Relax! It's easier said than done for most. In today's world, many people are living with chronic stress. While we know that this is a problem that can have prolonged effects on our health and relationships, many of us simply don't know how to effectively calm our mind and relax our body.*

### Conscious Relaxation

Relaxation doesn't happen by accident and it is unreasonable to think we can remove all stress from our lives. Learning to consciously relax is a valuable skill that will enhance your mind-body balance.

- Schedule relaxation time. Whether it's the first 15 minutes after you wake up, the last hour before you go to bed, or a mid-day break at work, make time to relax and recharge a routine part of your day.
- Do what you love. Read a book, listen to music, take a long hot shower. Slow your pace and live in the moment. If we only allow ourselves to do what we love when we have the time, the time may never come!
- Engage in physical fun. Play with your children, dance, participate in a sport, join a yoga class.
- Connect to others. Call and talk to a friend, spend time volunteering or go on a picnic with your family.
- Breathe slowly and deeply to begin the relaxation response. By extending your exhale a bit longer than normal you will soon find that you are inhaling more deeply and slowly.

### Meditation

People who meditate are found to enjoy better physical and emotional health. Practiced daily - sometimes twice or more - the typical duration is between 10 and 20 minutes.

- Sit in a quiet place with your back as straight as possible. Hold your hands in a comfortable position and keep your jaw relaxed.
- Breathe slowly and deeply with your eyes closed. Inhale while counting to five, hold for a count of five and then release to a count of five and repeat this process.
- Free your mind of all thought. This takes practice and concentration. Try repeating a single word or phrase such as "relax," "one" or "I am at peace" to help you focus.

### Guided Imagery

Another common technique for relaxation is to practice visualizing yourself in a peaceful setting such as a beach, mountain top or forest. Some people find that it is easier to visualize themselves in their favorite room. To begin guided imagery, try  
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the following exercise for 15 minutes:

- While sitting or laying comfortably, close your eyes and imagine your favorite place.
- Imagine that you are there. See and feel your surroundings, hear the sounds, pick up objects that you see, enjoying being in this space.
- As you relax, your breathing will slow down.
- You can return to this place at any time. As you begin to use this technique more regularly, the relaxation response will occur more easily.

## Progressive Relaxation

Many people utilize progressive relaxation techniques to relieve muscle tension, help prepare for sleep, or clear the mind of stressful thoughts. While there are a number of recorded options available at your local bookstore, you can make your own recording by reading the following slowly and leaving a short pause after each one.

- Lay on your back, close your eyes.
- Feel your feet. Sense their weight. Consciously release the tension and feel them sink into the surface below you.
- Feel your knees. Sense their weight. Consciously release the tension and feel them sink into the surface below you.
- Feel your upper legs. Sense their weight. Consciously release the tension and feel them sink into the surface below you.
- Feel your hips and abdomen. Sense their weight.

Consciously release the tension and feel them sink into the surface below you.

- Feel your chest. Deepen your breathing and consciously release the tension.
- Feel your hands and fingers. Sense their weight. Consciously release the tension and feel them sink into the surface below you.
- Feel your upper arms. Sense their weight. Consciously release the tension and feel them sink into the surface below you.
- Feel your neck and shoulders. Sense the weight. Consciously release the tension and feel them sink into the surface below you.
- Feel your head. Sense its weight. Consciously release the tension and feel it sink into the surface below you.
- Feel your mouth and jaw. Unclench the muscles and feel your mouth and jaw relax.
- Feel your eyes. Relax your eyelids and feel the tension release.
- Feel your face and cheeks. Consciously release the tension and feel them sink into the surface below you.
- Mentally scan your body for any remaining tension and consciously release the tension - let it slowly sink away.

For more assistance or ideas, contact SYMMETRY at (414) 256-4800 or (800) 236-7905 for confidential assistance.



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